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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 000627

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/09/2016

TAGS: MOPS MASS SU

SUBJECT: SSDF UNIT ATTACKS SPLA NEAR ABYEI

Classified By: Poloff Ron Capps for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) According to multiple sources, a Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) patrol moving between camps was attacked on March 8 leaving at least ten SPLA fighters dead. SPLM (Northern Sector) Political Secretary Agok Makur said that an SPLA patrol made up of integrated former South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF) soldiers were moving south towards Abyei escorting displaced persons returning to Bahr al Ghazal state from Khartoum when the group was attacked by a pro-National Congress Party government SSDF force. The attack took place near the village of Om Balil, approximately 40 kilometers from Abyei. We believe the SSDF unit involved is under the command of Tom al Nur Daldum, and is based in Bahr al Ghazal.

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¶2. (C) Comment: It seems unlikely that Daldum would have acted unilaterally. It is possible that this was simply a meeting engagement between two forces unaware of the others' actions, intentions or movements. The attack may have a chilling effect on IDP returns, but will likely heat up the region militarily.

WHITAKER